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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 DUBLIN 001161

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2014
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [KMPI](#)
SUBJECT: IRELAND: COMBATING EXTREMISM

REF: A. SECSTATE 159129
[B](#). DUBLIN 1087

Classified By: DCM JON BENTON, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B), (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Overall, Islamic extremism is not perceived to be a great problem in Ireland, even as the population becomes more diverse. Ireland is grappling with immigration for the first time in history, and its new found wealth is attracting growing numbers of migrants. Generally speaking, immigrants receive a warm welcome from the Irish. This is reflected in the level of their integration into Irish communities and the noticeable lack of hate speech. The GOI has developed initiatives to improve communication and access to minority communities, such as hiring immigrant police officers and developing an interculturalism committee to monitor hate crimes and build dialogue with the Muslim community. However, there are Muslim extremists in Ireland, and according to the GOI, they are under surveillance. In the fall of 2004 post developed a Muslim outreach program. This program was designed to facilitate dialogue with the Muslim community in Ireland, provide emboffs with insight into prevalent Muslim perceptions of USG policy and provide the means of relaying USG positions to interested community leaders. End Summary.

Muslim Outreach

[1](#)2. (S) Per ref A questions on programs designed to combat extremism, in the fall of 2004, post assigned an emboff to spearhead a new Muslim Outreach program. This outreach is long term. This project coordinates efforts and strategic goals of a number of embassy sections and agencies. The intended audience for this project includes leaders among the approximately 25,000 Muslims in the Republic of Ireland. The program has proven successful in helping post to understand the concerns of the Muslim community in Ireland and identify key Muslim leaders. The program has also seen success in relaying USG policies to interested community leaders, and ensuring access to members of the Shi'a Muslim community. However, post has met with obstacles in reaching out to the Sunni Muslims, stemming mainly from their opposition to USG policy in Iraq and Israel. This group regards emboffs' actions with suspicion and meetings and engagement in activities are more difficult to arrange.

[1](#)3. (S) The following answers are keyed to ref A. questions:

How post is monitoring and/or countering incitement and hate speech occurring within your host country and region.

--Embassy personnel monitor Irish media and are regularly out in the community. Hate speech as such is not a major problem here either towards the U. S. or between immigrants and the native-born Irish. Ireland is a country with a population of only 4 million people. Immigration is a new phenomenon here, and new immigrants are reluctant to jeopardize the Irish hospitality they receive by uttering hate speech. The Irish public and press speak out often against USG policies in Iraq, the environment and on development issues, but rarely are these or other disagreements vocalized by migrant or minority communities. Post records only one public message on extremism (ref B), which was issued by a local Imam in support of arresting extremists.

What post is doing, or plans to do, to work with local communities to spread a message of tolerance and non-violence.

--The Ambassador regularly reaches out to the public in speeches and letters to editors relaying the importance of tolerance and diversity in a society. Emboffs engage in a Muslim outreach program aimed at building dialogue with Muslim community leaders. Such engagement includes attending an 'Islam in Ireland' conference at a local mosque, inviting key Muslim leaders to relevant embassy functions and meeting with Muslims personally. Post's signature event in Muslim outreach in FY-05 was the Thanksgiving reception hosted by the Ambassador, to which faith-based groups and NGOs were invited along with some political party representatives. The event provided the Mission with a means to bring together a number of faith communities with whom we had not been in

contact before and who rarely if ever before met each other. Guests included Muslims, Jews, Copts, Catholics, Protestants, Romanian and Greek Orthodox, as well as GOI and NGO officials who regularly work with migrant and/or religious communities.

By focusing the event on American Thanksgiving, and timing the reception to coincide with the Ramadan Iftar, we were able to include several Muslim representatives, some of whom have proven to be strong contacts for the Embassy. The event received favorable prime-time news coverage and will be repeated in FY-06. Post also received approval on its nominee for the International Visitor Leadership Program, "A Program for Young Muslim Leaders on U.S. Political, Social and Educational Issues."

Identify individuals and groups who embody and promote tolerance and have broad influence among Muslim youth.

--A key contact and voice of moderation is the Imam of the Shi'a Mosque, Dr. Ali A. Al-Saleh. Dr. Al-Saleh, a local surgeon, with Iraqi/Irish dual citizenship, previously spent time in Eastern Saudi Arabia helping to promote democracy among the minority Shi'as.

--Another prominent, moderate spokesperson for Islam is Khalid Ibrahim, an Iraqi/Irish national of Shi'a Payli-Kurdish origin. Ibrahim is an activist with the One World Society and Frontline Defenders NGOs. He occasionally speaks out against extremism and for USG policy in Iraq in radio interviews.

--The most prominent Muslim in Ireland is Sheikh Hussein Halawa of the Islamic Cultural Center of Ireland (ICCI) (Sunni mosque). Halawa, Egyptian/Irish dual citizen, publicly condemns terrorism and all violence and is the symbol of Islam here in Ireland. ICCI also maintains the largest Muslim school in the country, therefore increasing his influence among Muslim youth. While his public message on extremism is very welcome, post still reserves suspicions on what Halawa says in private (ref B), and interprets his public message as perhaps more designed to allay Irish suspicions of extremist activities than to combat extremism.

--Ali Saleem (Egyptian-Irish Sunni Muslim) is Halawa's secretary and personal translator at ICCI. Saleem also

SIPDIS publicly denounces terrorism and violence and is a key contact for post, as well as the GOI. In July, he wrote articles on the history of the Muslim community and integration into Irish society for Spectrum, a journal published by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism and funded by the Irish Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Saleem works full-time in the administrative offices at ICCI, planning events, conferences, and outings for the center's youth.

What, if anything, the above individuals and groups are doing through the Internet and other mediums to counter extremist activity and propaganda.

--Both Ibrahim and Saleem participate in media interviews. Though they differ in backgrounds and views towards USG policies, both are public proponents of tolerance and peaceful dialogue.

Ireland's government's efforts to:

Create spaces for open intellectual debate through media and the internet.

--Ireland is an open society, with no need for government involvement in creating spaces for intellectual debate. Though not part of the GOI agenda, Halawa, the Chief Rabbi of Ireland and prominent Christian leaders gather occasionally to form the Three Faith Forum. This group meets to discuss the needs and issues of the three main religions in Ireland.

Identify individuals or groups engaged in incitement of violence.

--In July, after the 7/7 London bombings, the Prime Minister announced that up to 30 Al-Qaeda sympathizers are under surveillance in Ireland. These individuals are suspected of providing financial and logistical support to Al-Qaeda and Islamic terrorists abroad. The Minister of Defense announced that intelligence officers from the Army and Special Branch of the police have monitored suspected terrorist sympathizers since the late 1990s. The Embassy, at all levels, and across agencies, maintains a close dialogue and liaison with police and Justice Ministry officials on cases of concern.

Amplify voices of moderation, tolerance, and freedom.

--Due to Halawa's status as the chief Muslim in Ireland, he is seen by GOI officials as representative of Islam in Ireland. He has a high profile in Ireland and receives

invitations to represent Islam at events and in public dialogue, such as the 2004 Irish Presidential Inauguration, and in past parliamentary discussions on moral issues.

Identify, promote, and work with non-governmental partners and the press who advocate religious tolerance and moderation.

--The GOI, through the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, formed the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI). The purpose of this group is to partner government and NGO organizations to celebrate cultural diversity and at the same time, encourage integration of minorities into society. In particular, the NCCRI monitors racist incidents and attacks on religious groups.

In addition to these efforts, the GOI has introduced the following:

--The GOI recently announced a new initiative that waives the requirement for police officers to speak Irish. This was done in order to hire more minority police officers in order to interact more efficiently with the new immigrant communities. The intended result of this initiative is to provide police with a better understanding of minorities taking up residence in Ireland. By using police officers with similar ethnicities and religious beliefs, police hope to identify extremists and counter their ideology.

--Another GOI initiative to identify and sanction suspected terrorists is the passing of anti-terrorism legislation. On March 9, President Mary McAleese signed the Criminal Justice (Terrorism Offenses) Bill 2002 into law. This legislation significantly strengthened the government's ability to seize assets and prosecute those suspected of supporting terrorism. However, no charges have been made against any of the suspected extremists living in Ireland since this bill became law.

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